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P R E F A C E.

THE Statutes of the Royal Society were, for the most part, formed in the year 1663: An abstract of the Charters and Laws was published in the year 1667, in SPRAT'S History of the Royal Society; and in the year 1752, the Council published an Edition of their Charters and Statutes, as they *then* stood.

The Laws of the Royal Society, like those of other communities, were altered from time to time, until they appeared sufficient to embrace every contingency that might occur, while they held their meetings in Gresham College; which they continued to do for near the space of fifty years. But the arrangement of the Society's affairs being somewhat altered upon possessing an House of their own, it became necessary to make different establishments in many particulars; and to alter

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and augment some of their Statutes. However, the greater part of them was still left in the original form, suited to the situation of the Society at Gresham College.

The Edition of the Statutes in the year 1752, gave them as above described; together with a few additions, calculated to suit particular circumstances. But still many parts of them were not accommodated to the present times, nor to the change of place, and what depended thereon: neither was the order or connection of the chapters sufficiently attended to.

The Council have now judged it necessary, for various reasons, to review, new-model, and correct their Statutes, so as better to suit the present times and circumstances; to digest them in a more methodical order; and to give a new Edition of them, so revised, digested, and arranged.

They have also judged it expedient to premise a succinct account why some of the Statutes were altered, and why others were totally abrogated.

It had been the usage, for upwards of the first sixty years, to nominate and approve in *Council*, all Candidates for being Fellows, previously to their being proposed to the *Society* for Election; and they were enjoined to appear for Admission within four weeks after their Election. But, about the year 1727, objections having arisen to the short time of four weeks, some allowances were made to persons residing above forty miles from London; and in the year 1730, the present mode of propounding for Election, and fixing the certificate up for ten weeks in the Meeting-room, was settled. In the year

1753, it was enacted, that payment of the admission fee, and signing a bond for annual payments, were necessary to entitle a person to be publickly acknowledged a Member, after his Election; and in the years 1761, 1766, 1769, and 1770, some regulations were judged necessary to be made concerning the recommendation and election of Foreigners.

In the Statutes concerning the payments by the Fellows to the Society, several alterations became necessary; not only on account of forming anew the Chapter of *the Treasurer*; but also on account of each Fellow's receiving *gratis* a volume of the Philosophical Transactions yearly. For, the charge of printing the Transactions for the use of the Members, having much increased the yearly expense of the Society; it was judged reasonable and proper to advance the admission fee from *two* to *five* guineas; and afterwards, for other reasons, it was agreed that instead of *twenty, twenty-six* guineas should be paid in lieu of giving bond for annual contributions.

In the Chapter of the Election of the Council and Officers, a clause was added, in the year 1735 (on account of the great increase of Members) permitting every Fellow to deliver his three lists at the same time, at the Anniversary Elections; notwithstanding the apparent impropriety of voting for persons to be *Officers*, before it could be known that they would be elected Members of the new Council.

Of the Treasurer. At first, when the Society were not in possession of much ready money, it was judged necessary that the Fellows should pay their weekly contributions once a quarter; and the Treasurer's accompts were to be audited quarterly. He was not to have more than 20 l. in his hands at a time:

All surplus was to be locked up in the iron chest ; there being then no Public Funds : but the business of the Treasurer, as well as the mode of collecting the contributions from Members, having been long conducted in a manner very different from what was at first appointed ; the Statutes relating to the Treasurer have therefore been new formed, agreeably to the modern practice which has been in use for many years.

Of the Secretaries. The great alterations in the circumstances of the Society, together with the regulations concerning the publication of their Transactions, have rendered it necessary to alter the chapter relating to the Secretaries, and to have some additions made to it, with regard to the papers read to the Society, and their publication.

Of the Clerk. The statutes concerning the Clerk, mentioned in the publication of 1752, were such as suited the Society at their first institution, and while they continued at Gresham College, when they had little or no concerns with rents, taxes, repairs, &c. And as every Officer had but little business to do for the Society, besides what was done at the usual Meetings, few rules for them, were found wanting, and as few for their Museum and Library ; which, being in the Galleries of that College, the resident Professors had an Eye over those Collections : but, when the Society became possessed of a House of their own, fit for their Meetings and Curiosities (which happened in the Year 1710) it was found necessary to have a resident Officer, who should have the care of the House, and of the necessary preparations for the Meetings, and also the care of the Library and Repository. However, as the Society's finances rendered a considerable degree of frugality convenient, it was determined (under the Presidentship of Sir

Isaac Newton) that one and the same person should supply the places of Clerk, Librarian, Keeper of the Repository, and Housekeeper, and also officiate as Mace-bearer, and as Deputy to the Treasurer.

The articles in the chapter of the publication of the Transactions, and their delivery, which were inserted in the Edition of 1752, concerning the Clerk's account of the books issued out, are omitted; as he is now responsible for them in another way. Another article in the same chapter is also omitted, concerning the admission fee, as being included in the new chapter of the payment of the Fellows.

Several additions are made to the former statutes relating to the books and papers; to declare the Society's power over the papers read to them; and also to inform the Fellows how they may consult the books in the Society's Library. The articles of the Register and Letter-books are now totally omitted; because the continuation of those books has, many years ago, been found useless; other methods having been used to preserve the original papers not published, as well as those which are published, at a rate much less expensive.

The Office of Curator was at first thought so essential, that the Society allotted to it a salary more considerable than any one of the public Professors received at that time, besides the apartments they were to have in the Society's House or College. But, as the Society's revenues have not, to this day, been sufficient to enable them to assume the exterior splendor which, by their charter, it seems to have been imagined that they might in due time arrive at; the appointments of Curators, with large allowances, and of Serjeants at Mace

&c. have hitherto been declined. Besides, the experimental part of Philosophy having begun, even in the early years of the Society, to be cultivated; several gentlemen procured apparatuses, to satisfy themselves in private; so that many years had not passed, before a considerable part of the Fellows were so well acquainted with the mode of making experiments, that such accomplished Curators have not been found necessary; and, when Experimental Philosophy arrived at such popular Regard, as to be frequently explained in public Lectures, that kind of knowledge became more generally diffused. Several persons, indeed, have formerly been actually employed by the Society as Curators; particularly, the Doctors Hooke and Desaguliers. But neither of them ever had above 50*l.* a year; and that, not certain: it depended on the number of Experiments which they had exhibited to the Society in the preceding year. The chapter of the Statutes relating to this Office is therefore omitted in this Edition.

In like manner, at the institution of the Society, the fabrication of Instruments for experiments was not commonly known to workmen; and therefore some statutes were made concerning *Operators*, or persons well acquainted with the use of tools in various works; who were at first judged necessary to attend the Meetings, to be ready to assist in any of the Experiments to be made before the Society: but the Experimental Philosophers having long since taught and familiarized such general knowledge, in working on things formerly unknown, particular Operators to the Society have been for many years found useless; as the different Artificers employed by them can now readily furnish whatsoever is wanted.

So a *Printer* to the Society, was an Officer that appeared necessary at the time when the statutes concerning that office were established: but the affairs of Printing and Bookselling are so greatly altered since the institution of the Society, that Printers and Bookfellers have for many years stood in no other relation to the Royal Society than any other Tradesmen they employ; and particularly, since the Transactions have been printed under their own care. They themselves now buy and pay for the paper; employ and pay the Printers and Engravers; correct and publish their own Works; and finally dispose of to Purchasers the surplus copies, above the number distributed amongst their Members by their own Librarian.

Thus much seemed proper to be premised, in order to shew the grounds and reasons of the alterations now made.